

YOU BE THE JUDGE

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THE BELGIAN SHEEPDOG

Based on the CKC standard for all four varieties

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

After reading about the Belgian Tervuren's history and purpose, and a description of an unofficial ideal, you are invited to judge a class of four comparatively sound males. Each of the four examples will have four faults – two you can see, and the two faults that are not visible will be identified.



HISTORY

In Europe up to the late 1800s, there was a vast number of sheep-herding breeds, quite similar in type, that were bred for their working abilities rather than their appearance. Over the centuries, a particular type evolved to meet the specific needs of shepherds in what is now Belgium. With the advent of the machine age, this shepherd dog's usefulness was threatened and fanciers feared that, in time, these strong, agile, loyal and clever dogs would disappear. In 1891, early fanciers established a club and wrote the first standard. Eventually the breed became known throughout the world as the Belgian Shepherd Dog.

While the early Belgian Shepherd Club members agreed on conformation and temperament, they could not agree on coat type or colour; hence the four varieties. Each variety was named after the Belgian town or area where it was favoured – ie., the Belgian Tervuren (rich fawn to russet-mahogany or grey), the Belgian Malinois (short haired), the Groenendael (long haired) and the Laeken (rough haired).

Aside from coat and colour, all four varieties are identical and my illustrated ideal sans coat applies equally to each. For reasons other than breed preference, I chose to illustrate the Tervuren variety.

PURPOSE

Of the four varieties, the Belgian Tervuren consistently earns the greatest number of conformation and obedience titles. Unquestionably an excellent sheep herder, the Tervuren is also used as a guide dog, and for search and rescue, protection work and tracking. To excel at these tasks, he is bred for ease of movement, quick footwork, strength, intelligence and sensibility as well as beauty. All four Belgian Sheepdogs are equally versatile.

TYPICAL

The first impression of the Belgian Tervuren is that of a well-balanced medium sized dog, males 24 to 26 inches (61 to 66 centimeters) and bitches 22 to 24 inches (56 to 61 centimeters) at the withers. Elegant in appearance and strength, the Tervuren catches the eye with a warm, blackened fawn coat and proud, black masked face on a head topped with alert, prick ears. The tail typically has a black tip. A single white patch is permitted on the chest, but it should not extend to the neck or breast.

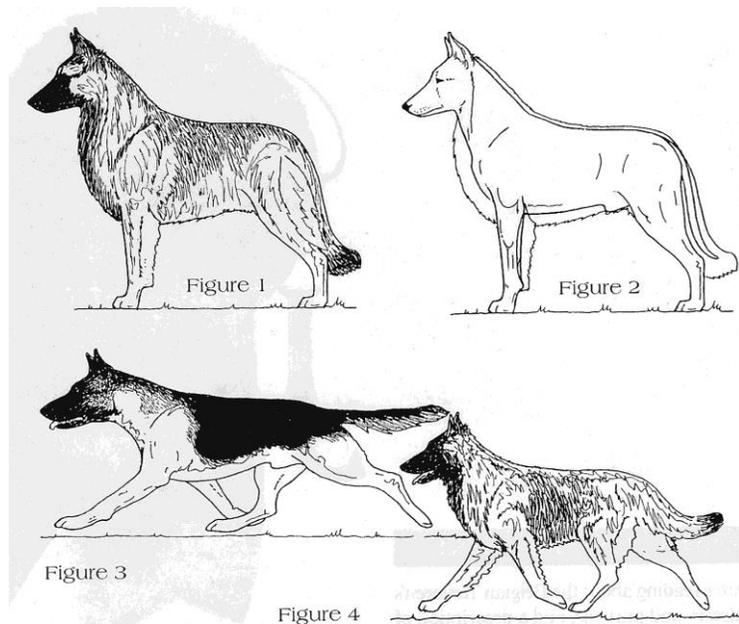
It can be seen on the coated example (Figure 1) that the head is in proportion – the length of the muzzle and the skull are equal, and the two parallel planes are divided by a clearly defined but not abrupt stop.

The eyes, which you cannot see because of his dark mask, are dark brown, medium in size and slightly almond shaped. The triangular dark ears are set high on the head. The muzzle is moderately pointed, the jaws strong; the nose and lips black. The teeth meet in either a scissors or pincer bite.

The rather long, elegant neck is slightly arched and tapers smoothly into accentuated withers. The long shoulder blades are well laid back; the upper arm is also long, and angled back to an elbow level with the brisket. The short back and short loin are level; the croup is medium long, sloping gradually to the base of the tail. The chest is deep but not broad. The underline curves smoothly upward, neither tucked up nor paunchy. The tail set is neither high nor low, the tip bent level with the hock. The hind legs are powerful without heaviness, the thighs broad and heavily muscled, the stifles clearly defined. The rear pasterns are short and the feet are slightly elongated.

SEE THROUGH

Since you cannot use your hands to see under the coat, Figure 2 reveals what I believe to be correct conformation and proportions. The body is square, measured from the point of the shoulder to the buttocks, and from the withers to the ground; the forelegs are equal in length to the depth of the body. The legs should be straight and the slightly sloped pasterns are of medium length. The front feet are rounded.



FIGURES 3 AND 4

The shoulder blade should be well laid back but not the maximum 45 degrees possessed by the German Shepherd Dog. The Tervuren has a more modest shoulder layback than the GSD and this difference is manifested in their individual reach and extension at the trot in profile. The longer bodies, more angulated German Shepherd Dog (Figure 3) not only exhibits greater reach and extension than the square Belgian Tervuren (Figure 4), but it overreaches. The square Belgian Tervuren couldn't handle that much angulation, nor would it want to. That doesn't mean that full extension of the Tervuren's fore and hindquarters doesn't happen; it does, but not to the extent displayed by the GSD.

JUDGING SCENARIO

These four dogs have faults (none has a disqualifying fault). The intent of this scenario is to bring the significance of certain faults to your attention and for you to weight each dog's faults against its virtues, then the four dogs against each other and come up with a first, second, third and fourth.

DOG A

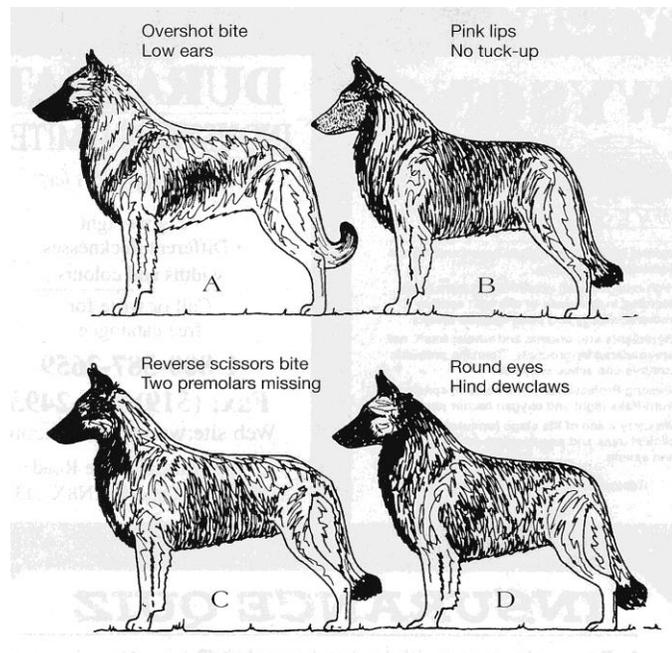
This is a sound, impressive dog that is tall but not over 27 inches (66.5 centimeters), which would disqualify him. He has many virtues as well as faults. One visible fault would be the hook in his tail. This hereditary deformation is said to often coincide with a fusing of the end vertebrae of the tail. The second visible fault is that he is high on the leg; his foreleg is longer than his depth of body – great for fast speed at the gallop, but not for endurance herding.

An overshot bite is listed in the standard as a fault. Dog A's bite is 1/8 inch overshot. His ears are erect, but are not set high. The base of the ear should not come below the centre of the eye. The standard advises that an overshot bite is a serious fault, and fanciers inform that the Tervuren's ears are an important breed characteristic.

DOG B

Nicely angulated front and rear, this dog's two visible faults are his short neck and missing mask. The short neck departs from "well balanced and elegant". Colour-wise the Tervuren should have a black muzzle, as the dark colour on the face is a distinguishing feature. He should also have a black mask.

What you cannot see is that he has pink on the outside of his lips (a pigment fault mentioned in the standard), and the tuck up should be moderate, not paunchy.



DOG C

How heavily would you fault Dog C's long body? The second visible fault is a steep croup. The Tervuren's croup should slope gradually. This dog has an undershot bite – a serious fault – and he is missing two premolars. The Belgian Sheepdog standard asks for body length – measured from the point of the shoulder to the buttock – to be equal to height, and states that the mouth should have a full complement of strong, white, evenly set teeth.

DOG D

What disturbed you most about this dog's balance? Right. His legs are short. There are short-legged herding breeds, but the Tervuren is not one of them. His feet are poor, a serious fault for a herder. The Tervuren's eyes should be dark brown, medium in size and slightly almond-shaped. The dewclaws on this dog's hind legs have not been removed. The standard simply says, "Dewclaws if any, should be removed" (usually shortly after birth). It doesn't say "must"; however, there is the danger of the claw being torn while the dog is working.

DECISIONS

Judging good specimens is easy compared to judging poor against poor, especially when it involves a first place ribbon or points. If you would like a further indication of what judging poor against poor may involve, take a close look at your Winners Dog, then be willing to certify that "in my opinion Winners Dog is deserving of championship points." I placed these four dogs B, C, D and A.